

The President's Weekly Address *February 27, 2010*

As the Winter Olympics draw to a close this weekend, I just want to take a minute to congratulate all the athletes who competed in these games. And I especially want to say how proud I am of all that the American men and women have achieved over the last few weeks.

Whether it was the men's hockey team's stunning upset of the Canadians on their way to the gold-medal game, or Lindsey Vonn's heroic gold-medal comeback from a shin injury, or Apolo Ohno becoming the most decorated American winter Olympian of all time, you can't help but be inspired by the sheer grit and athletic prowess on display in Vancouver.

And it's not just the medal count that's inspiring, though we've certainly done great on that score. What's truly inspiring is the character of the men and women who have won those medals, the sacrifices they've made, the integrity they've shown, the indomitable Olympic spirit that says no matter who you are or where you come from or what difficulties you may face, you can work hard and train hard and still triumph in the end. That's why we watch. That's why we cheer. That's why in the middle of an extremely challenging time for America, we've been able to come together as one Nation for a few weeks in February and swell with pride at what our citizens have achieved.

Now, when it comes to meeting the larger challenges we face as a nation, I realize that finding this unity is easier said than done, especially in Washington. But if we want to compete on the world stage as well as we've competed in the world's games, we need to find common ground. We need to move past the bickering and the game-playing that holds us back and blocks progress for the American people.

I know it's possible to do this. And we were reminded of that last week when Democrats and Republicans in the Senate came together to pass a jobs bill that will give small businesses tax credits to hire more workers. We also saw it when Democrats and Republicans in the House came together to pass a bill that

would force insurance companies to abide by commonsense rules that prevent price-fixing and the other practices that drive up health care costs.

We need that same spirit of cooperation and bipartisanship when it comes to finally passing reform that will bring down the cost of health care and give Americans more control over their insurance. On Thursday, we brought both parties together for a frank and productive discussion about this issue. In that discussion, we heard many areas of agreement. Both sides agreed that the rising cost of health care is a serious problem that plagues families, small businesses, and our Federal budget. Many on both sides agreed that we should give small businesses and individuals the ability to participate in a new insurance marketplace, which Members of Congress would also use, that would allow them to pool their purchasing power and get a better deal from insurance companies. And I heard some ideas from our Republican friends that I believe are very worthy of consideration.

But still, there were differences. We disagreed over whether insurance companies should be held accountable when they deny people care or arbitrarily raise premiums. I believe they should. We disagreed over giving tax credits to small businesses and individuals that would make health care affordable for those who don't have it. This would be the largest middle class tax cut for health care in history, and I believe we should do it. And while we agreed that Americans with preexisting conditions should be able to get coverage, we disagreed on how to do that.

Some of these disagreements we may be able to resolve. Some we may not. And no final bill will include everything that everyone wants. That's what compromise is. I said at the end of Thursday's summit that I am eager and willing to move forward with members of both parties on health care if the other side is serious about coming together to resolve our differences and get this done. But I also believe that we can't lose the opportunity to meet this

challenge. The tens of millions of men and women who can't afford their health insurance, they can't wait another generation for us to act. Small businesses can't wait. Americans with preexisting conditions can't wait. State and Federal budgets can't sustain these rising costs.

It's time for us to come together. It's time for us to act. It's time for those of us in Washington to live up to our responsibilities to the American people and to future generations. So let's get this done.

And thanks for listening.

Remarks on the Earthquake in Chile *February 27, 2010*

Good morning, everybody. Earlier today a devastating earthquake struck the nation of Chile, affecting millions of people. This catastrophic event was followed by multiple aftershocks and has prompted tsunami warnings across the Pacific Ocean. Earlier today I was briefed by my national security team on the steps that we're taking to protect our own people and to stand with our Chilean friends.

Early indications are that hundreds of lives have been lost in Chile, and the damage is severe. On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I send our deepest condolences to the Chilean people. The United States stands ready to assist in the rescue and recovery efforts, and we have resources that are positioned to deploy should the Chilean Government ask for our help. Chile is a close friend and partner of the United States, and I've reached out to President Bachelet to let her know that we will be there for her should the Chilean people need assistance and our hearts go out to the families who may have lost loved ones.

We're also preparing for a tsunami that could reach American shores later today, particularly in Hawaii, American Samoa, and Guam. A tsunami warning is in place, and people have been alerted to evacuate coastal areas. I urge citizens

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:10 p.m. on February 26 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on February 27. In the address, the President referred to Lindsey Vonn, skier, and Apolo Anton Ohno, short-track speedskater, 2010 U.S. Olympic team. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 26, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 27. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

to listen closely to the instructions of local officials, who will have the full support of the Federal Government as they prepare for a potential tsunami and recover from any damage that may be caused.

I also urge our citizens along the West Coast to be prepared as well, as there may be dangerous waves and currents throughout the day. Again, the most important thing that you can do is to carefully heed the instructions of your State and local officials.

Once again, we've been reminded of the awful devastation that can come at a moment's notice. We can't control nature, but we can and must be prepared for disaster when it strikes. In the hours ahead, we'll continue to take every step possible to prepare our shores and protect our citizens. And we will stand with the people of Chile as they recover from this terrible tragedy.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.